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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000043

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/NCE MLABONTE AND EFICHTE; EUR/PGI FOR JBUCKNEBERG;
G/TIP FOR MHALL AND JDONNELLY

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SUBJECT: TIP UPDATE: SLOVAKIA PASSES ACTION PLAN; SENTENCES
TRAFFICKERS TO JAIL

REF: 05 BRATISLAVA 903

Classified By: DCM Lawrence R. Silverman for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (SBU) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Slovakia has carried its 2005 momentum on trafficking issues forward into the new year with admirable resolve: the Cabinet passed its National Action Plan on January 11; courts sentenced eight people from Slovakia and the Czech Republic to prison terms ranging from 3 to 8 years for trafficking women to the Czech Republic and forcing them to work as prostitutes; and the National Coordinator for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons has breathed new life into the case of seven traffickers arrested in 2003 for sending at least 60 women abroad over an eight-year period. While Slovak authorities admit that there is more that can be done, we have been pleased that the government continues to make anti-trafficking efforts a centerpiece of its law enforcement and human rights efforts. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

SLOVAKIA ADOPTS NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

2. (SBU) Maintaining the timeline given to visiting G/TIP and EUR/PGI officers in November 2005, National Coordinator for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons Pavol Draxler submitted Slovakia's first National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons to the cabinet in January; it was adopted by the government January 11 after the Minister of Interior made a strong public case for attention to this issue. Since the plan was approved after the 2006 budget was adopted, it will be implemented with funds from the current Ministry budgets (earmarking approx. USD 242,000 for this year's activities). In the future, the Action Plan will be renewed to reflect the permanent anti-TIP funding Draxler hopes to submit in the 2007 budget process. The Action Plan consists of 19 initiatives, designates lead ministries, and assigns deadlines (Note: As expected, most of the initiatives are the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior, where the National Coordinator is housed. End Note). In addition to a "help line" which Draxler says should become active soon, the government is undertaking a better victim support network, as well as a media campaign -- already prepared, "very nice" and ready for deployment -- to increase awareness of trafficking as part of Slovakia's overall prevention strategy.

3. (C) Draxler told us that, because of the very thorough cooperation among the relevant Ministries during the drafting of the plan, approval by the cabinet had been a foregone conclusion. However, Draxler reiterated concerns he voiced to the G/TIP delegation in November, noting that the NGO community has not chosen a spokesperson or coordinating official and are "expecting the state to manage them," which Draxler, himself a former NGO activist, finds ironic. He expressed hope that one organization -- Slovak NGO heavyweight Pontis Foundation -- was emerging as a likely leader in this coordination effort. As far as challenges, Draxler has identified the establishment of the victim support network as the "hardest" task called for by the action plan, requiring significant resources as well as NGO coordination.

COURTS SENTENCE TRAFFICKERS TO PRISON

4. (U) In early January, courts in the northern Slovak town of Martin sentenced 8 traffickers -- seven Slovaks and one Czech -- to sentences ranging from 3 to 8 years in prison for trafficking 12 women to the Czech Republic, where they were forced into prostitution. The traffickers were arrested in 2003.

NEW ENERGY FOR DORMANT CASE

5. (SBU) Responding to an inquiry from post, Draxler (strictly protect) investigated the status of a case stemming from the 2003 arrest of 7 members of a trafficking gang which had sent at least 60 women to Germany, Poland, Switzerland, and France over an 8-year period. Draxler told us that his

inquiries to Nitra, where the case was filed, revealed that the prosecution of the case was "on hold" while other priorities were pursued. Draxler (who is close to Minister of the Interior Palko) "shook up" the prosecution and breathed new life into the case, which he expects will be brought to trial -- if not resolved -- this year.

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